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# China aims to see its soccer teams among world's best

BEIJING (AP) — China's cabinet has released a reform plan aimed at raising the level of soccer in the country. Medium-term goals in the plan issued by the State Council include substantially increasing the number of young people playing soccer and seeing the women's team return to the top of the rankings.

In the long term, China wants to bid to host the World Cup and improve its men's team.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has led the drive to improve the quality of Chinese soccer, both to boost popular participation in sports and burnish China's reputation as an international sporting power.

The cabinet's 50-point plan includes instructions to promote soccer on school campuses, create schools dedicated to training aspiring professional players, and expand the number of stadiums.

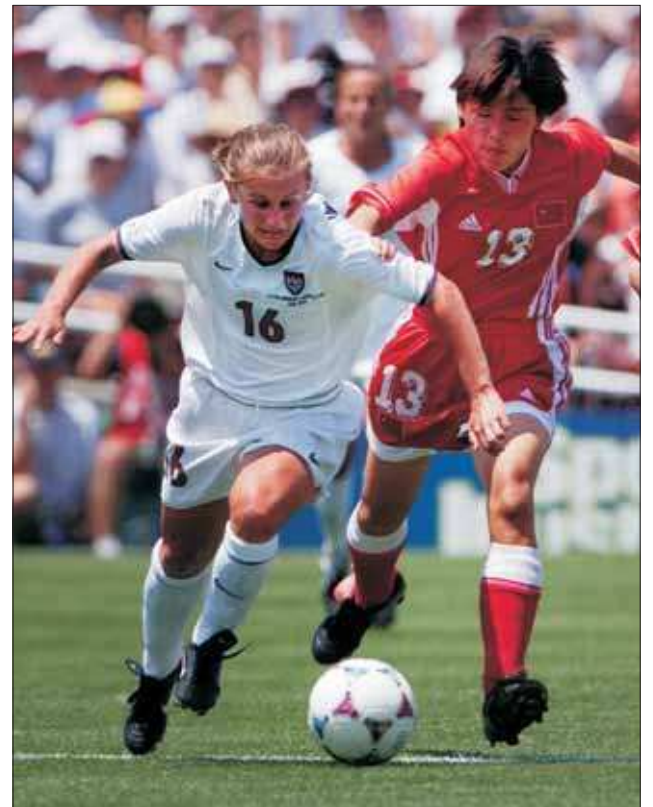
It also gives the China Football Association the power to independently decide its own staffing and financing, rather than being run by China's sporting administrative body.

Authorities will also look at putting a cap on players' salaries in order to increase competition between rich and poor teams and avoid financially destabilizing bidding wars. The plan said research will also be done into further restricting the use of foreign players, only five of whom are currently permitted per team.

China's lack of success in men's soccer has consistently perplexed the country's sporting authorities, who've made the country a global power in sports such as gymnastics, swimming, and volleyball.

China's men are currently ranked 83rd by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), one rung below Honduras. They've qualified for only one World Cup, in 2002, when they were eliminated in the group stage without scoring a goal.

The team's poor performance is blamed on a history of



**RAISING EXPECTATIONS.** China's Ying Liu (#13, right) battles with Tiffany Milbrett (#16) of the United States during the Women's World Cup championship match at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, in this July 10, 1999 file photo. China's cabinet has released a reform plan aimed at raising the level of soccer in the country, where poor international showings have been blamed on a history of corruption and a lack of youth programs. (AP Photo/Kevork Djanshean, File)

corruption, overly bureaucratic government supervision, and a weak youth training system that has seen the numbers of registered youngsters playing the game fall year by year.

## Matsui teams up with Jeter at baseball charity in Japan

By Jim Armstrong  
AP Sports Writer

TOKYO — Hideki Matsui went to bat for children affected by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami and hit a home run.

The 2009 World Series MVP teamed up with former New York Yankees teammate Derek Jeter to raise funds for children from Japan's disaster-stricken Tohoku region.

"Jeter played a big role in all of this," Matsui said. "The kids had a magnificent day. Hopefully, when they go back to their everyday lives tomorrow, they'll have new dreams to sustain them."

Jeter and Matsui conducted a youth baseball clinic then managed middle school teams in a three-inning contest, won 2-0 by Matsui's squad.

The day's final event was a home run derby between the U.S. and Japanese students. Matsui thrilled the fans when he stepped up to the plate and hit a towering homer over the right-field wall at the Tokyo Dome, where he spent 10 seasons with the Yomiuri Giants before heading to the U.S.

During his four-day visit to Japan, Jeter also took in a sumo tournament and visited Matsui's hometown.

"It was a wonderful few days," Jeter said. "Hideki showed me around, I got a chance to go see his hometown,



**A HOME RUN FOR CHARITY.** Former New York Yankees slugger Hideki Matsui hits a home run in front of his team players during a home-run derby at a charity baseball game at the Tokyo Dome in Tokyo. Matsui went to bat for children affected by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami and hit a home run. The 2009 World Series Most Valuable Player teamed up with former Yankee star Derek Jeter to raise funds for the children from Japan's disaster-stricken northeastern regions. (AP Photo/Toru Takahashi)

I got a chance to see sumo wrestling, and to top it off today was this great charity event. I'm grateful Hideki invited me and it's all for a great cause."

## Fiji reclaims Hong Kong 7s title beating NZ 33-19 in final

HONG KONG (AP) — Fiji reclaimed the Hong Kong Sevens rugby title when it routed defending champion New Zealand 33-19 in the final.

Fiji blasted to a 21-0 lead in the first half, taking the tension out of the 12th final matchup between the tournament's most successful sides.

Each time New Zealand rallied, Fiji had a reply, and even denied New Zealand the last say when Fiji's Vatemo Ravouvou and Apisai Domolailai bundled out Rieko Ioane just shy of the left corner flag.

"Tactically, we were really astute," Fiji coach Ben Ryan said. "I'm really pleased with the way they managed the final."

The win was Fiji's third in four years in the Hong Kong Sevens, and a record-extending 13th in the tournament it prizes above all others.

Great support play set up Savenaca Rawaca for the opening try, then Semi Kunitani stole ruck ball from New Zealand and sent in Jerry Tuwai. New Zealand tried a five-man attacking lineout, but then trying to back up the sole player out wide ended up giving an intercept try to Rawaca.

Beaudine Waaka's try just before halftime put New



**HONG KONG SEVENS.** Fiji's Jasa Veremalua, left, runs in to score a try while Joe Webber of New Zealand attempts to tackle him during the final match of the Hong Kong Sevens rugby tournament in Hong Kong. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)

Zealand on the board, and Scott Curry's immediately after raised hope. But it was dampened by a try by Jasa Veremalua for 28-12 with seven minutes to go.

Curry scored his second try after Sam Dickson took in three defenders, but Ravouvou swept around the left and

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